



EAR INFECTION (Acute Otitis Media)

What causes ear infections?

Acute otitis media (ear infection) is caused by fluid collecting behind the eardrum. The eardrum becomes red and painful. A common cold can often lead to fluid buildup behind the eardrum. Common colds are caused by viruses. The fluid that builds up can also provide a good place for bacteria to grow, which causes a bacterial ear infection.

What are the signs and symptoms of ear infections?

Earache	Dizziness
Pulling on or batting at ears	Nausea
Irritability	Stuffy nose
Fever	

How does someone get an ear infection?

Your child cannot get ear infections from others. You or your child can get colds from others. Colds may lead to ear infections.

How can ear infections be prevented?

Keeping your child away from large groups of children may help prevent the colds that lead to ear infections. This is not always easy to do. Hand washing is one of the best ways to reduce the spread of the viruses that cause colds. Keeping your child's shots up-to-date can help prevent infections. Some people think breastfeeding babies for at least 6 months may help to keep them from getting ear infections. Keeping children away from second-hand cigarette smoke may also stop them from getting some ear infections.

What should you do if you think your child has an ear infection?

It is always a good idea to contact your healthcare provider if you think your child may have an ear infection. You should see your healthcare provider if your child has ear pain, fever lasting more than two days, or cold symptoms lasting more than 10-14 days. Only a healthcare provider can decide which children need antibiotics and which do not. Some children with mild symptoms can be given pain relievers and watched to see if they get better. Ear infections often go away on their own. Non-aspirin pain relievers (Tylenol or ibuprofen) can be used to treat pain. NEVER give your child aspirin. Giving aspirin to children may cause a serious form of organ failure called Reye's syndrome.

What is otitis media with effusion (OME)?

You may hear the words "otitis media with effusion." OME means there is fluid behind the eardrum. OME often happens after colds. It can also follow acute otitis media. It often does not cause problems and it usually does not need treatment. If OME lasts for several months, or if it is causing hearing problems, see your healthcare provider. They may give your child antibiotics.